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# Forms and Explanation in the Phaedo

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Stough - Atlanta 1973

FORMS AND EXPLANATION IN THE PHAEDO  
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December 1973

In a well-known passage at Phaedo 100c Socrates declares that "if anything else is beautiful besides Beauty itself, it is beautiful for no other reason than because it partakes of that Beauty". With that statement he advances the hypothesis of Forms in an effort to prove that the soul is immortal but also, apparently incidentally to that central theme, to expound his own view of "causation" (τὴν αἰτίαν ἐπιδείξειν).<sup>1</sup> The section of the dialogue in which the Platonic Socrates is made to recount his early inquiries into natural philosophy, and which provides the context of the quotation, contains Plato's most explicit statement of the explanatory role of the Forms. It is just that function of Plato's Forms, as set forth at Phaedo 95e-106e, which I propose to examine in this paper. More specifically my question will be: What is the force of the claim that the eidos is aitia? The method I follow in trying to answer that question is dictated by the important consideration that the hypothesis of Forms is presented in that context as a solution to certain vexing problems. My inquiry therefore falls into two main sections in which I pose the following questions: What is the nature of the problems set forth in relevant passages of the Phaedo, and how does Plato's doctrine solve, or attempt to solve, them? A third and a final section deal with some implications of the thesis developed in the earlier parts of the paper.

1. The Problem of Opposites

Socrates' ostensible reason for hypothesizing Forms at Phaedo 100b-c is to answer an objection raised by Cebes (87a-88c), which seemed to cast doubt on the immortality of the soul. But Plato's aims are seldom one-dimensional. It is soon intimated (97b4-7), and finally asserted (100b7-9), that the Forms are also intended to provide a solution to another difficulty, a problem concerning the "causes of each thing, the reason why each thing comes into being, perishes, and is" (96a9-10: εἰδέναι τὰς αἰτίας ἑκάστου, διὰ τί γίγνεται ἑκάστων καὶ διὰ τί ἀπώλλυται καὶ διὰ τί ἔστι). Philosophically the more interesting, this aporia lies just beneath the surface of the dramatic discussion of the soul's fate after death. My initial task will be to try to determine the nature of Socrates' puzzlement over "causation" in an effort to isolate an important sense in which the Forms, in Plato's mind, might be said to provide an explanation of something.

of Aristotle  
in Metaphysics  
1026a20-22

A useful bit of information is woven into Socrates' account of his early experience in search of the causes of things. His troubles began with attempts to explain, as he tells us, the "coming to be", "perishing", and "being" of things (95e9, 96a9-10, 97b5-6, 97c6-7). As a youth he was curious about the conditions under which living creatures are bred (συντρέφεσθαι); he wondered whether memory and opinion arise (γίγνεσθαι) out of the senses of hearing, sight, and smell, or something else; whether knowledge comes into being (γίγνεσθαι) from memory and opinion. And he was equally concerned about the destruction (φθορά) of these phenomena. But Socrates soon reached the conclusion that he was unsuited for these studies, which so bewildered him as to cause dissatisfaction with all explanations, even those he had thought reasonable prior to his inquiries. Indeed, he implies (96c3-7) that the study of nature actually compelled him to abandon his pre-philosophical views. There follows (96c6-97b3) an account of the explanations that Socrates was naively (and, as he now thinks, mistakenly) prone to accept prior to his philosophical investigations. I want to take up these puzzles very shortly. But what is interesting about the brief introduction to them (96a6-c6) is that it tells us that Socrates' philosophical puzzlement should not be confused by us with the naive curiosity about natural causes that prompted his researches (96a6-8).<sup>2</sup> Socrates' philosophical difficulties are actually generated by that inquiry, and they concern the coming to be, perishing, and being of things. We should therefore expect these notions to be especially relevant to an

studies?

not many, because  
it has to do  
with memory

understanding of the puzzles that follow in the text. The point of the introductory passage (96a6-b6) might be put this way. Socrates' investigation of the "causes" of things has unearthed certain philosophical problems connected with generation, destruction, and being--problems that his own favorite common-sense explanations (96c3-7), as well as the more learned theories of the physicists (96b3), had either not taken into account or been able to solve. Is there any diagnosis of these puzzles, consistent with the text, which will make each of them intelligible as philosophical problems and thereby help us to understand the source of Socrates' difficulties?<sup>3</sup> I believe that such an account can be given, if we are careful to observe Plato's own language as a reminder that, as he apparently understands these problems, they are supposed to throw serious doubt on the intelligibility of something's being, becoming, or perishing. Plato's own way of viewing them gives unity to what otherwise must seem a very heterogeneous mixture of issues and problems.<sup>4</sup> For convenience I shall arrange the puzzles into three groupings, the first and third specifically dealing with coming to be (and perishing) and the second with being.

1. Socrates first mentions the problem of explaining growth (96c7-d6). He used to think that the reason why a man grows ( $\delta\iota\delta\ \tau\acute{\iota}\ \alpha\upsilon\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma\ \alpha\upsilon\gamma\gamma\acute{\iota}\nu\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ ) is that he takes in food and drink thus adding to the bulk of his body. Flesh is added to flesh and bone to bone, "and in this way the small man becomes large" ( $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \sigma\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omega\ \gamma\acute{\iota}\gamma\upsilon\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota\ \tau\omicron\nu\ \sigma\mu\iota\kappa\rho\delta\nu\ \alpha\upsilon\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\nu\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\alpha\nu$ ). But the explanation had to be discarded, and (from the clause just quoted) we might expect this to have something to do with the fact that "becoming" ( $\gamma\acute{\iota}\gamma\upsilon\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ ) is the thing to be explained, more specifically something's coming to be its "opposite".<sup>5</sup>

The concept of opposites ( $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\nu\tau\iota\alpha$ ), which is central to this puzzle and the rest, promises a clue to their solution. On the assumption that opposites are designated by "incompatible" predicates,<sup>6</sup> it is reasonable to suppose that philosophical difficulties that crop up over them will involve logical inconsistency in assertions assigning properties to something. Granted that this is so, the possibility of a philosophical snarl seems less remote. For if, in setting forth the problem, we consciously fail to observe the distinction between a character and the subject it characterizes, contradictions will turn up in Socrates' apparently inexplicable proposition that "the small man becomes large".

Suppose that the subject expression ("the small man") refers not to one or another substantial individual of a certain sort, characterized by being small, but to a unitary subject comprised in this case of two "things" of equal status, namely, man and small(ness) blended into one, and so no less suitably designated by "the small" ( $\delta\ \sigma\mu\iota\kappa\rho\delta\varsigma$ ) than by "the man" ( $\delta\ \alpha\upsilon\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$ ). To clarify this supposition and its implications, let me try to bring into focus the picture that lies behind it. We can imagine a concrete individual as a complex blend of all those ingredients, each enjoying the same rank as a "thing", designated by its multiple substantial and adjectival predicates.<sup>7</sup> To do that it is necessary to erase the familiar distinction between substance and attribute and to view both alike as possible "thing"-components of a complex object. If that distinction is obliterated, the differing functions of substance and quality terms, as well as the distinction between predicative and identity statements, will follow in its wake. Both man and small(ness), to return to Socrates' example, will be "thing"-components of the same blended object itself fully "described" by enumeration of the names of each member of the complex. And if that is so, the name of any component, not just a substance term, can (in principle) function as a referring expression to designate (however incompletely) the blended object. Finally, any descriptive statement that links a character predicate to a linguistic subject conceived as designating such a complex will be a statement identifying that character with a component of the blended object. Hence the usual predicative statement will be what I shall term a "partial" identity statement. Just as the proposition that Simmias is (predicatively) small is entailed by the predication that Simmias is a small man, so (according to our present picture) the partial identity statement that the complex object

referred to by "Simmias" is small will be entailed by the full identity that defines the being of Simmias by the conjunction of all his components. That Simmias is small will follow from the fact that small(ness) is one of Simmias' components--will follow in virtue of the being of Simmias, in virtue of what Simmias is. Now inasmuch as the components of the complex are jointly constitutive of that thing, anything incompatible with one of those components will be incompatible with the object itself. If we take "the small man" of Socrates' example to refer to such a blended object, that object cannot be said to be large without contradicting the proposition definitive of its being. To make such an assertion would be to say that the blended object is partially identical with something incompatible with one of its components and thus incompatible with its own being. Similarly "the small man becomes large" will also be internally inconsistent by the implication that at some time a component of the complex object will be identical with its opposite. It says, in effect, that at some future time (t) "the small man is large" is true.

The troubles only intensify with further elaboration of the picture. Both substantive and qualifying terms name components of the blended object and so enjoy equal authority in their partial statements of what it is. Both can function referentially to pick out that complex object. The result, for the example in the text, is that "man" (ἄνθρωπος) no more appropriately refers to the subject of discourse than "small" (σικρός). A legitimate, if more compressed, alternative formulation of the original proposition will therefore be "the small becomes large" (ὁ σικρός γίνεται μέγας),<sup>8</sup> the subject term referring as usual to the complex by naming one of its constituents. But in the case of "small" this dual role may cause serious trouble. As the name of a "thing"-component it is equivalent to "smallness" (σικρότης), while in its role as logical subject it functions no differently from, in this instance, "man". Because the linguistic subject can refer to the complex only by naming an ingredient of that object, the proposition seems to assert explicitly that the component named by the subject term becomes its opposite. Our picture thus forces the formal contradiction that "the F(F-ness) becomes not-F(F-ness)", where F is a character variable.<sup>9</sup>

I have intentionally presented this scheme as a construction designed to explore the ramifications, in the context of the Phaedo, of treating attributes as if they were things. Nevertheless, it would be possible for someone to reach the same conclusions quite without contrivance, that is, if for some reason or other he simply failed to draw the distinction between substance and attribute necessary to avoid the confusion. My thesis will be that such a person is the Platonic Socrates who, during his youthful inquiries into the causes of things, uncovered the philosophical problem of "becoming", which his own and other more elaborate physical explanations were unable to solve. No account of the consumption of food and drink by the body, or any other hypothesis of the natural philosophers, will ever succeed in explaining why (διὰ τί) what is small becomes large, if that claim is understood to be logically self-contradictory. What is needed--and this is the first fruit of Socrates' philosophical inquiry--is an explanation that will make possible (logically) the "coming to be" of opposites, so that what is small may intelligibly be said to become large, thereby rendering comprehensible the natural phenomenon of growth.<sup>10</sup>

The confusion which I have maintained is crucial to this puzzle comes out clearly in the text at 103a4-c2, where Socrates explicitly draws a distinction between an opposite thing (τὸ ἐναντίον πρᾶγμα at b3 and περὶ τῶν ἔχόντων τὰ ἐναντία at b6) and the opposite character itself (αὐτὸ τὸ ἐναντίον at b4 and περὶ ἐκείνων αὐτῶν ὧν ἔχόντων ἔχει τὴν ἐπωπυμίαν τὰ ὀνομαζόμενα at b8). The distinction clears up precisely that muddle into which Socrates' early speculations had drawn him and which in this subsequent passage is very cleverly put in the mouth of one of his interlocutors. It is interesting that the passage at 103a4ff. explicitly refers back to 70d7ff., where the discussion concerned opposite things. There the distinction between character and thing characterized was quite correctly observed by Socrates (being prior to his tale of philosophical perplexity), but Socrates'

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S & C  
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S & C



clarity in that passage was apparently not matched by his listeners, as Plato now indicates (at 103a4ff.), thus making with dramatic skill and subtlety an important philosophical point. By calling attention to the possibilities of confusion latent in the notion of the "coming to be of opposites", Plato brings out the source of Socrates' own youthful difficulties in explaining the phenomenon of growth.

misses 98d8ff  
(initial statement)

2. Socrates next takes up some puzzles (98d8-e3, 101a-b, 102c-d) having to do with comparative differences of magnitude and quantity. He used to be satisfied to explain such differences by reference to the degree to which one object exceeds (or falls short of) another. One man is greater than another by (reason of) a head.<sup>11</sup> Ten is more than eight because of the additional two. An object two cubits long is greater than an object one cubit long, because of the excess amount of half its own length. But, as he remarks a little further on (101a-b), an inconsistency (*ἐναντίος λόγος*) arises here. The larger will be larger for the same reason that the smaller is smaller, and the larger will be larger because of something (a head) which is small. This, we are told, is a "monstrous" consequence (*καὶ τοῦτο δὴ τέρας εἶναι*). The same kind of difficulty is involved in claiming that ten is more than eight by (reason of) two or the object two cubits long is greater than the cubit-long object by (reason of) half its own length. Considerations of this sort led Socrates to despair of finding a satisfactory explanation of these things.

A pair of curious, and important, assumptions are at work in this passage. If we generalize the examples, Socrates seems to be objecting that opposite occurrences or facts cannot be accounted for by the same explanation and also, apparently, that the *aitia* cannot be (or be characterized by) the opposite of that which it purports to explain. The reason for these assumptions is by no means obvious, but if we grant the conditions necessary to make them plausible, we shall perhaps be nearer to an understanding of what Socrates means by *aitia*. Notice that violation of one or other of these principles is evidently enough to constitute a *reductio ad absurdum* of the sort of explanation he was previously disposed to accept. This suggests that "by (reason of)" and "because of" are understood by Socrates to carry something like deductive force. If the relationship between the explanatory proposition and the explanandum is one of entailment, such that the second can be deduced from the first, the inconsistencies mentioned in the examples under review are quite genuine.<sup>12</sup> I shall return to this point later, but I want to turn now to another less obvious instance of problems connected with relative magnitudes.

At 102b-d Socrates remarks that Simmias is larger than Socrates but smaller than Phaedo, and there is a question as to the correct explanation of this fact. It is suggested that a (mistaken) way one might attempt to proceed would be to invoke the being of Simmias (*τὸ Σιμμίαν εἶναι*) to account for it. I include the fact to be explained in this passage in the second group of puzzles, because with the help of our model it is possible to recast it in the form of a familiar logical problem involving relative magnitudes. And once the problem is so understood, there is good reason for rejecting the hypothesis, as Socrates does, that Simmias has the properties in question because he is Simmias or because Phaedo is Phaedo. Suppressing the distinction between Simmias and his attributes, we can think of Simmias as a blend of all the "thing"-components named by predicate expressions that are true of him. The proposition that Simmias is larger than Socrates but smaller than Phaedo can then be expressed as two partial identities, each following logically from the proposition defining what Simmias is. But since the conjunct of those two propositions is internally inconsistent, the resulting contradiction will be a restatement of the fact to be explained. The implication of this passage may well be that it would be fruitless to try to explain such an impossible state of affairs merely by reference to the being of Simmias. And Socrates would again have reason to complain that, if we accept the mistaken explanation, "the larger will be larger for the same reason that the smaller is smaller". The failure to distinguish between character and owner again ends in paradox, this time over the question

of the "being" of Simmias, a predicament similar to the one involving growth, in which Socrates had previously come up against the unintelligibility of "becoming".

The text permits a closer look at the anatomy of this puzzle. At 102c10 we are told that because Simmias is larger (μεῖζων) than Socrates but smaller (ἐλάττω) than Phaedo, he comes to be called both small (σικρός) and large (μέγας). The assumption is that the predicates "large" and "larger than" ("small" and "smaller than") are to receive the same treatment in the exposition (and solution) of this problem (100e5-6). Both degrees of the adjective have the same reference, which in the case of Simmias will be largeness (and smallness) (102b3-6).<sup>13</sup> There is clearly some slippage in the move from "Simmias is larger than Socrates" or "Simmias is large in relation to Socrates" to "Simmias is large", but contrary to what, for that reason, may seem to be the most inviting hypothesis, the problem worrying Socrates (the incoherency of the second puzzle) does not spring from the unqualified ascription of relational predicates to a single subject. Socrates tells us that if A is larger than B and smaller than C, A is indeed both large and small, but not in relation to the same thing. Relative to the size of B, A has largeness, while he has smallness compared to C.<sup>14</sup> No contradiction results from that, so the correct diagnosis cannot be that these problems arise because A is (predicatively) both large and small. The source of the trouble is more likely to be that A is thought of as being (partially) identical with the opposites large(ness) and small(ness). On that hypothesis it would seem to follow that "the large (largeness) is the small (smallness)", a proposition which Socrates clearly understood to be self-contradictory. Indeed he underscores this in the passage immediately following (102d6-8) by his insistence that "not only will largeness itself never admit to being simultaneously large and small, but also the largeness in us will never accept smallness or admit to being exceeded". Again the crucial fallacy must be traced to insensitivity to any relevant distinction between an attribute and that of which it is an attribute, such that to say of Simmias that he is large is not to predicate a property (relational or otherwise) of Simmias, but to assimilate to Simmias a thing-component apparently of the same logical type.<sup>15</sup> (Notice that we need not suppose Socrates to mean in this instance that largeness will not accept smallness, because largeness itself has the property of being large and therefore cannot also be characterized as small without contradiction.<sup>16</sup> Though Plato may indeed have been prey to such a confusion (and that is an independent question), it is important to see that the puzzles in this passage are governed by a fallacy logically more primitive than that of self-predication.)

3. The third type of problem relates to arithmetical operations (96e5-97b4, 101b10-d3). Socrates professes inability to understand why or how one thing can become two by the addition of one, or how, when each is single, they can become two merely by being joined together. Nor can he grasp how two can come into being by the division of a single thing for the same sort of reason. His next complaint has a familiar ring. To claim that the generation of two can be explained first by conjunction (bringing together) and then by disjunction (separating) is to offer "opposite" reasons for the same occurrence, and this is apparently no less absurd than adducing a single explanation for opposite occurrences. On the supposition that this last objection can be rendered intelligible in much the same manner as its twin in the preceding puzzle, let us concentrate on the more central issue of arithmetical operations.

That this part of the puzzle is not framed explicitly in the language of opposites does little to disguise it. The question is how a unity can become a plurality, and "one" and "two" are treated accordingly as incompatible predicates. If it is claimed that one (thing) becomes two, there is no way to avoid paradox; mathematical talk of addition and division will scarcely explain how the F (a unity) can become not-F (a plurality). Again the slide between (formal) attribute and subject, between a unitary entity and unity itself, is essential for this puzzle to have any bite. Notice that it makes no difference whether the problem is stated in terms of the juxtaposition of physical objects or in more abstract

mathematical language. The question is the same in either case: How does two come into being from one? The "things" involved may be understood either as material objects or abstract numerical entities and the arithmetical operation either physical or conceptual.<sup>17</sup> Socrates' question is addressed to the mathematicians, whose arithmetical propositions imply paradoxically that one becomes many and, what is even more absurd, that the explanation of this anomaly is an operation (physical or conceptual) such as addition or division. It is essential to see that regardless of how the operation is construed, the logical problem remains and, further, that Socrates takes that problem to be one of coming to be and perishing. The account of philosophical problems left unsolved by his predecessors concludes with Socrates' unequivocal denial that he can understand by their methods how one comes into being, and in general "why anything else comes to be, ceases to be, or is" (97b5-7).<sup>18</sup>

*possibly not  
= inf. y*

I think it is evident that the tangles which lie at the heart of all these puzzles are conceptual in nature and so are not essentially tied to either physical or mathematical speculation as such. But this is obscured by the diverse areas of inquiry in which the difficulties crop up and further masked by the language of "being" and "coming to be". It is also clear that Socrates' intent is not to deny such obvious facts as that when animals ingest food they grow, that one man is a head taller than another, or that when we add one to one the result is two. His chief concern is not with these facts as such, but with their possibility, that is, with the intelligibility of statements alleging to explain them. When Socrates asks for the "causes of each thing, the reason why each thing comes into being, perishes, and is", he is asking a question that is not, indeed cannot be, met by statements such as, "a man grows by the intake of food", "one becomes two by addition (or division)", "this man is taller than that by a head". The puzzles in question are intended to challenge the possibility of something's being or becoming of a certain "opposite" character. The force of Socrates' question is not to ask why or how something is (becomes) F but to ask how it is possible for that thing to be (become) F, where being F seems to necessitate being not-F as well.<sup>19</sup> My suggestion has been that the logical snarls embedded in these puzzles can be defined by a failure to distinguish adequately between character and thing characterized. If so, the problem of understanding how a thing can be or become something "opposite" is surely, at its roots, a problem of coming to understand what it is to predicate a character of an individual. Propositions attributing characteristics to things have not yet been sorted out as a special group different in function from those that identify the thing mentioned in the predicate with that designated by the subject term. It will be no small part of the merit of Plato's attempt to solve these problems that it seeks to carve out just such a distinction.

## 2. The Hypothesis of Forms

Socrates puts forth the doctrine of Forms straightway as a solution to his philosophical difficulties. He will revert, he says, to the well-known notion of his that "there exists a Beautiful itself, just by itself (αὐτὸ κατ' αὐτό), and also a Good, a Large, and all the rest" (100b5-6) and, on that hypothesis, he will maintain that the reason why an object is beautiful, for example, is because it partakes of that Beauty.<sup>20</sup> As for all the "learned" explanations of these things, he cannot understand them and will therefore cling "simply, artlessly, and perhaps even foolishly" to his own "safe" explanation that the only thing that makes an object beautiful is the "presence" (παρουσία) or "communion" (κοινωνία), or whatever that relationship turns out to be, of Beauty itself (100d-e).

It is clear that Socrates intends this novel explanation uniformly to provide a solution to the three sets of puzzles outlined, all alike problems of being, becoming, and perishing. He runs through the examples again briefly. It is by (because of) Largeness that things are large, by Smallness that they are small and for no other reason. Similarly ten is more than eight in virtue of Plurality and

not because of two. The same kind of account must be given if we are to understand why something becomes large or small, more or less numerous, and the like (101c2-4). Two comes into being by participating in Duality and one by participating in Unity, addition and division playing no role in the relevant explanations. Socrates presents his hypothesis of Forms to account for these facts and thus to establish the legitimacy of characterizing individuals by the use of opposite names (102a10-b2).

I have argued that the question "Why (in virtue of what) is x F?"<sup>21</sup> must be understood to ask "How is it possible for x to be F", where being F suggests the unfortunate predicament of being not-F as well. If we treat Socrates' hypothesis as an answer to this last question, then the formula "x is F in virtue of (because of) Form  $\emptyset$ " will read " $\emptyset$  makes it possible for x to be an F".<sup>22</sup> And for that to be an adequate solution to his troubles concerning "causation", it will have to have the effect of defusing the contradictions seemingly embedded in the very concepts of "being", "becoming", and "perishing". On the assumption that this diagnosis is correct as far as it goes, the introduction of another class of entities over and above individuals such as Socrates and Simmias, sticks and stones, and other similar phenomena, together with the claim that an individual is of a certain character in virtue of being related to one of those entities, regardless of how that relation is construed (100d5-6), would suggest very strongly that Plato is recommending a different, and presumably improved, way of understanding predicative assertions of the form "x is F", where "x" stands for an individual and "F" a character.<sup>23</sup> If "x partakes of  $\emptyset$ " expands the meaning of the original assertion, Plato has indeed come up with a means of resolving the contradictions generated by the conjunction of opposites.

The text at 102b3-d2 bears out that inference. Socrates observes (b8-10) that "the fact of Simmias exceeding Socrates is not in truth as the words<sup>24</sup> express it". And he goes on to say that "Simmias surpasses Socrates not by nature, not by reason of the fact that he is Simmias ( $\tau\tilde{\omega}$  Σιμμίαν εἶναι), but because of the largeness that he happens to have ( $\tau\tilde{\omega}$  μεγέθει ὃ τυγχάνει ἔχων). Nor does he surpass Socrates because Socrates is Socrates, but because Socrates possesses smallness in relation to the largeness of Simmias".

I take the point of those remarks to be that assertions such as "Simmias is larger than Socrates" are misleading, insofar as they imply a wrong account of the facts. The implication seems to be that what we are trying to explain is actually misdescribed by "Simmias is large(r)...", which, as a consequence of that misdescription, wrongly suggests that the reason why Simmias surpasses Socrates is because he is Simmias--because of the being of Simmias himself--whereas in truth the reason is supplied by a quite different entity, Largeness, to which he stands in a particular relation. I have argued that the picture of a concrete individual as a complex blend of "thing"-components named by its substantial and adjectival predicates forms a backdrop for the problems Socrates is grappling with in this passage. In keeping with that model, "Simmias is large(r)..." is a partial identity statement entailed by the complete "description" that identifies Simmias with a conjunction of "thing"-components. Because the form of the proposition "Simmias is large(r)..." can be viewed as representative of that ontological structure, we are now in a position to appreciate the import of Socrates' remarks. "Simmias is large(r)..." misdescribes the fact in question by misrepresenting its structure. As a result it suggests misleadingly, in accordance with the picture embodying that misrepresentation, that the fact of Simmias surpassing Socrates ( $\tau\tilde{\omega}$  τὸν Σιμμίαν ὑπερέχειν ἑκπάρους) is to be explained by the being of Simmias ( $\tau\tilde{\omega}$  Σιμμίαν εἶναι), by the self-evident tautology that Simmias is identical with himself. But of course the same analysis applies to "Simmias is smaller than Phaedo". So if the confusions that generate this mistake are not cleared up, we are left with the logical embarrassment that contradictory consequences will follow from a single identity statement: opposites will be produced by a single "cause". It is hardly surprising, then, that Socrates should have balked at the earlier "explanation" that one man is larger and another smaller "by a head" (101a), as well as the notion that there can be opposite "causes" for the generation of two. The first presupposes

contradictory implications in a single explanation, while the second commits us to identical consequences deduced from contradictory explanations.

The new formula "x partakes of  $\emptyset$ " provides a solution to these puzzles, because it goes right to the heart of the trouble. By separating the subject of discourse from its attributes and affirming a relation between them, it discloses the actual structure of the sort of fact misrepresented by locutions of the form "x is F". If Simmias is distinct from largeness and also from smallness, we are not forced to conclude that "the being of Simmias" is an explanation with contradictory implications or that largeness and smallness are one and the same.<sup>25</sup> The separation of Simmias from his attributes makes it possible for Simmias to "be" both large and small.<sup>26</sup>

Notice that Socrates apologizes for the pedantic tone of his new way of talking (*συγγραφικῶς ἐρεῖν*) but insists on its necessity if we are to understand how we can speak intelligibly of Simmias as both "large" and "small" (102c10-11). Indeed, the peculiar awkwardness of the language is an indication that Socrates' original problems in trying to explain the being, becoming, and perishing of things arose out of a failure to distinguish between individual and character in such a way as to allow him knowingly to predicate (knowingly not to identify) the one of the other. The new language of Forms and "participation" has the effect of altering the picture called up by the substance-attribute confusion. A character, now distinct from a concrete individual but at the same time related to it, can no longer be thought of as a component of a blended object. It is something possessed by an individual, indeed, shared in by many individuals. We thus have a unitary object described by its relation to other things rather than one "described" by enumerating its components. Socrates' "bookish" way of talking is meant to display the ontological structure of a fact involving two discrete but related entities rather than a single composite of miscellaneous character-ingredients.

Immediately following (beginning at 102d5) Socrates carefully differentiates between asserting opposites (characters) of each other and asserting opposites of individuals. Statements of the former type only are outlawed. They are banned because they are logically vicious, both those in which the Forms themselves are said to be their opposites and those in which a character is affirmed of its opposite "in us" (102d6-e1). But to say, for instance, that the small man is, or becomes, large is not the same as saying that the small (smallness) is, or becomes, large (102e2-5), because the ontological structure that actually underlies the first of these statements preserves it from the genuinely contradictory implications of the second.<sup>27</sup> Plato's new formula assures that Socrates can be both small and large by illuminating the structure of the fact described, namely, the individual Socrates standing in a certain relation to entities distinct from himself, hence, "receiving" (*δεξιόμενος*) opposite characters.<sup>28</sup>

### 3. "Opposites in Us"

At 102d6-7 Plato has Socrates draw an explicit distinction between "Largeness itself" (*αὐτὸ τὸ μέγεθος*) and the "largeness in us" (*τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν μέγεθος*), a point that has often been noted in the literature on the *Phaedo*.<sup>29</sup> Yet the contextual significance of the distinction between the Form and its concrete instantiation has, I think, been overlooked. My contention will be that far from adding a third element to an ontology already burgeoning with new entities, Plato is there simply calling attention to the two versions of contradiction we now have to guard against and to distinguish from statements that legitimately affirm opposites of something. The novel hypothesis of Forms brings with it, as he must indeed point out, the conceptual impossibility of affirming either member of a pair of opposite Forms of the other. But, granted that the Form Largeness will not admit its opposite, he is also careful to remind us that to affirm the largeness "in us" of its opposite is logically no less pernicious. This is a pointed reference back to the philosophical *aporiai*, in which logical difficulties seemed to be generated by "the



small man becomes large" and "Simmiias is larger than Socrates but smaller than Phaedo"--statements which, on reflection, made it look very much as if the smallness "in us" becomes, and is, large and vice versa. The implication is that we cannot construe those statements in a philosophically naive manner without unwittingly affirming opposite characters "in us" of each other. To fall victim to that confusion is tantamount to offering an explanation of the fact in question which, however seductive, is no less vicious logically than the undisguised contradiction that openly identifies the Form Largeness with its opposite Smallness.

The contrast in question thus has a legitimate purpose in its context other than the ontological separation of Form and immanent character.<sup>30</sup> Indeed the relevant ontological distinction has already been made. And once that has been done, it is permissible to contrast the Form as such, just by itself (ἐν τῇ φύσει, αὐτό καθ' αὐτό) with the Form as it is shared in by (related to) some individual, in its manifestation as a characteristic of (say) Simmiias (ἐν ἡμῖν). Given the discovery of a crucial difference between character and thing characterized--a logical coup effected by an ontological postulate--the "largeness in us" is no more than an alternative way of referring to the phenomenon of someone's being large (τὸ τὸν Σιμμίαν ὑπερέχειν Σωκράτους), the very fact that originally stood in need of explanation.<sup>31</sup> The phrase ἐν ἡμῖν should not be pressed further. At 103b8, following one occurrence of the contrast between opposites "in nature" (ἐν τῇ φύσει) and "in us" (ἐν ἡμῖν), the opposites themselves are said to be "in" those other things that come to be called after them, and that is a clear reference to (opposite) Forms.<sup>32</sup> To force a precise and consistent meaning on these terms is to forget that Plato's language is not technical. He has already acknowledged a certain looseness in his description of the relation between Forms and particulars at 100d5-6, where indeed the "presence" (παρουσία) of the Form is actually cited as an acceptable candidate to depict that relation.

Though the notion of a duplicate set of properties is quite irrelevant to the message Plato wants to convey, he does have to insist on the necessity of separating a character from whatever may be characterized by it, because to do that is in effect to separate opposites from each other. As they appear "in us" those opposites are mixed (blended) together and confused. Each visible particular is "multi-form" (πολυειδές), appearing perhaps both beautiful and ugly, large and small, equal and unequal (80b4). Plato's point is that if, in accordance with our perception of them, we continue to take the opposites as "one" neglecting to sort them out as "different" (ἕτερον) from their subjects (hence from each other), we shall be unable to untangle the difficulties to which he has made Socrates fall victim.<sup>33</sup> But the ontological distinction between a character and its owner is the hypothesis of Forms. Consequently, the statement that Simmiias possesses largeness is equivalent logically (and ontologically) to the apparently more ambitious claim that Simmiias partakes of the Form Largeness. Both locutions, along with "the largeness in Simmiias", do the same important work of divorcing attribute from subject, of drawing out the real implications of "Simmiias is large(r)...".<sup>34</sup> This is made clear at 102b1-c8, where Socrates mentions as the reason (explication) why an individual (e.g., Simmiias) is (said to be) of a certain character (e.g., large), not only that the individual "shares" (μεταλαμβάνειν) in a Form but also that largeness is "in" (ἐν) Simmiias and that he "possesses" (ἔχειν) that character. All three expressions are in fact signs of a first major step toward sorting out the troublesome notion of predication from an undifferentiated concept of being.

Much the same sort of interpretation can be given of Plato's use of the terms "withdraw" (ὀπекχωρεῖν) and "perish" (ἀπόλλυσθαι) of the opposites "in us". His aim in introducing these two metaphors at 102d9-e2 (followed by others carrying similar meanings) is to set the stage for the proof of immortality by presenting what appear to be alternative ways of picturing the concept of logical incompatibility. That the terms are not intended to be applied either exclusively or literally to immanent opposites taken as entities in their own right is revealed by the use



Plato makes of them beginning at 103d5 and again at 106a3. When he puts the two terms to work, it is the subject to which one member of a pair of opposites necessarily belongs that is said to "withdraw" or "perish" at the approach of the incompatible character (104b7-cl). Snow, fire, and soul, all of them subjects (among others mentioned) necessarily characterized by opposites, must either "withdraw" or "perish" in the face of heat, cold, and death respectively. While snow and fire (understood as substances) may conceivably perish at the approach of the incompatible character, soul, a subject essentially characterized by life--an opposite excluding death (ἀθάνατον) and entailing the imperishable (ἀνώλεθρον)--can only withdraw in the face of death. It is surely clear, at least by the end of the immortality argument, that Plato wants us to understand soul as an individual naturally defined by life and thus forced to withdraw (quite literally) at the approach of death. But prior to the beginning of that argument (from 102d5 to 105c7) the talk is confined neither to individuals nor to opposite characters "in us". In particular, it is not specified whether the subject that "brings along" (ἐπιφέρει) an opposite is a concrete thing or a certain sort of thing. The subjects in question are referred to quite indeterminately as "snow", "fire", "three", and "two".<sup>35</sup> I believe that the resultant ambiguity is crucial to Plato's objectives. On the one hand, he wants to hold open the possibility of treating these subjects as individuals in combination with a literal (and visual) understanding of "withdraw" and "perish" for the purpose of the immortality argument, where the soul must be viewed as an individual that survives death. I mean that he needs the concrete picture vividly depicted by these terms precisely because that final argument has an important existential point. But prior to that final argument he wants to emphasize the logical incompatibility between characters "in us", a point which need not have ontological overtones peculiar just to it. So, if there is nothing in Plato's language that commits him to an ontology in which form copies must be included along with Forms and individuals, it would be a disservice to burden him with it. Let us see whether or not this is the case.

Throughout the passage in question Socrates is talking about individuals, Forms, and the manifestations of these Forms "in us". Under no circumstances, neither just by itself nor in any of its multiple manifestations, will a Form admit its opposite. To stress that, as he does for example at 102d5-103a2, is merely to deny logical compatibility between opposite characters. He sums up at 103c7-8: "We have agreed then on this general point that an opposite will never be opposite to itself". But when Socrates goes on to speak of the opposite "in us" and something else that "brings along" that opposite, as "withdrawing" or "perishing" at the approach of the incompatible character, he seems to be saying something more. If, as I have suggested, there is intentional ambiguity in the text from 102d5 to 105c7, the reference to certain other things such as fire and snow, bearing with them opposite characters "in us", could be to the concrete individual substances or, with equal plausibility, to the sorts of things identifiable as fire and snow. Following the thread of Socrates' argument up to 103c7-8, let us take him to mean the latter. The additional claim then concerns an incompatibility relation holding between opposites and certain other characters that are not themselves opposites. The metaphors "withdraw" and "perish" serve only to underline that incompatibility. That is, if we take snow and fire to be kinds of things rather than substantial entities, the statement that snow must "withdraw" or "perish" at the approach of heat can be understood to claim no more than that either snow and heat are incompatible (snow "withdraws") or snow is not snow (snow "perishes"). We are being told that because snow and cold are logically inseparable (ἔχει τὴν ἐκείνου μορφήν αἰεί), to deny the incompatibility between snow and heat is contradictory. Socrates' exact words are (103d5-8), "snow, being what it is, will never admit the hot, as we were saying just now, and still be what it was, snow and also hot, but on the approach of the hot it will withdraw or perish". In brief, at this stage of the argument Plato does not need a literal interpretation of "withdraw" and "perish" to make his point, which is a

logical one. If snow and fire are understood to be kinds of things rather than physical substances, the two metaphors stripped of their imagery merely extend an incompatibility claim already made at 103c7-8 to a new set of characters. Nevertheless, the referential ambiguity of "snow", "fire", and the rest remains for a very good reason. Once the discussion returns to the question of immortality, Socrates' argument must be able to exploit that ambiguity. The force of his argument rests on the possibility of giving these same subject terms a concrete reference, so that soul, an individual existent, will be understood to withdraw quite literally, hence to survive, at the approach of the opposite death.<sup>36</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

The interpretation I have defended rests on the claim that an elementary but critically important logical distinction provides the key to understanding the problems that beset Socrates in the Phaedo. If that distinction seems too simplistic to have been missed by Plato's predecessors and contemporaries, it is enough to recall the numerous passages in the dialogues in which Plato has Socrates pose the question "what is (the) F?" and receive in reply a "swarm" of F-things.<sup>37</sup> In each case Socrates carefully explains the difference between asking for that in virtue of which something is F and asking for a list of (types of) things or actions which are F. In fact that very confusion, which Plato wove into Socrates' statement of the puzzles in the Phaedo, was in his own eyes pervasive and difficult to penetrate. Originating in the unclarified and "mixed" nature of sensory experience, it was reinforced by a linguistic structure sanctioning (predicative) assertions of the form "x is F" and their contradictories and finally threatened to become part of the arsenal of philosophy itself in compliance with the necessities of a Parmenidean-type logic. In that context it is not difficult to see why the hypothesis of separately existing characters (Forms) would be invoked to explain (to render consistent) those puzzling factual discrepancies. However easily overlooked by an unreflective intelligence, such problems could scarcely be dismissed by someone who had fully appreciated the power and implications of a rigorous dialectic that purported to establish the conceptual impossibility of something's being, becoming, or ceasing to be of certain opposite characters.

If my argument is correct, we may have good reason to believe that Plato was seriously occupied with logico-ontological problems of the sort first posed by the Eleatics before he wrote the Parmenides and other "critical" dialogues of his mature period.<sup>38</sup> But the exact nature of the puzzles in the Phaedo is rendered particularly obscure to us by the language at Plato's disposal for dealing with philosophical questions. The language of αἰτία, γένεσις, and φθορά, and a context in which the hypothesis of Forms is presented apparently in competition with the physical theories of the natural philosophers suggests quite misleadingly that the "facts" explained by the doctrine of Forms are on a par with physical phenomena others had sought to understand in terms of such causes as heat, cold, air, fire, and even mind. But Socrates' rejection of the physicists' causes gives us a hint that this may not be the case-- a hint that is borne out by the specific examples chosen to illustrate the problem of "causation".<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, the language and context also tell us that Plato's own conception of explanation is tied to a physical model of causation. By this I mean that to explain how it is possible for (say) Simmias to be both large and small, he must posit entities to which Simmias is related and which, in being so related, explain the possibility of this fact, just as the physicists accounted for natural phenomena by the interaction of physical substances. Plato's new entities are of course not physical objects, and we have seen that they do not do the same work as physical causes, but the context of the Phaedo blurs that distinction. It shows that for Plato those differences were not so sharply etched. In coming to grips with what are essentially logical and conceptual problems Plato doubtless had in mind and followed the example set by the natural philosophers. It seems very likely, therefore, that he thought of his

Forms as causes of certain puzzling facts in a manner initially not wholly unlike that in which others had believed air or fire to be causes of various physical phenomena.<sup>40</sup> Plato's language suggests that his own explanatory formula, though strikingly different in function from any other, was fashioned after those of his precursors.

1. In a valuable article ("Reasons and Causes in the Phaedo", Phil. Rev., LXXVIII (1969), pp. 291-325) Professor Gregory Vlastos has reminded us that αἰτία is much broader in meaning than the word "cause", which is frequently used to translate it. He goes on to argue that by failing to distinguish between "cause" and "reason" in our translation of the Greek term we are apt to misunderstand Plato's solution to the puzzles at Phaedo 96c-97b, which invokes the Forms as reasons (logical αἰτία) in deliberate and purposeful contrast to the causes (physical αἰτία) naively endorsed by Socrates in his youth. Though it seems to me doubtful whether the distinction in English between "reason" and "cause", important as it is in many philosophical contexts, will bear the burden in interpreting the text that Vlastos wants it to bear, I do not wish to appear to beg any substantive questions by the mere choice of terms to translate αἰτία. In many cases I shall render it by the neutral "explanation", but sometimes, when the context seems to call for it and nothing in my argument hinges on the translation, by "cause", "causation", or "reason". I trust no philosophically sensitive reader will be misled by this. What is clear is that the hypothesis of Forms is intended to be explanatory; what has to be made clear is the sort of explanation it provides.
2. Compare Meno's puzzlement at Meno 80a-b and that of the slave boy at 84a-d. R. Hackforth writes in a similar vein that Socrates' "study forced upon him the recognition of deeper problems concerning causation, which he had never suspected to be problems", but Hackforth takes a different view of the nature of these problems from the one I offer in this paper. Cf. R. Hackforth, Plato's Phaedo (Library of Liberal Arts, 1955), p. 131; W.D. Ross, Plato's Theory of Ideas (Oxford, 1951), p. 26.
3. I say "consistent with the text" because the best that can be done here is to try to reconstruct the sort of philosophical difficulty that gives rise to these puzzles from the scattered hints and suggestive remarks embedded in Socrates' account of them and their solution. No interpretation can claim absolute confirmation from the text, but over and above consistency we can look for an account that renders the largest part of the Platonic context philosophically comprehensible and to that extent plausible or even compelling.
4. Offhand it is difficult to see what the physiology of growth (96c7) has to do with the matter of relational predicates (96d8), not to speak of arithmetical operations such as addition and division (96e5). Thus Vlastos (op. cit., p. 309, n. 50), overlooking Plato's linguistic (conceptual) framework, is misled into excluding Socrates' remarks about growth (96c7-d6) from the puzzles to be solved, on the ground that they "involve no absurdity". He fails to see that Socrates' common sense beliefs about growth, which philosophy forced him to abandon ("unlearn"), are infected with the same sort of (logical) difficulties as beset the rest of the puzzles.
5. In this passage Plato does not explicitly refer to "large" and "small" as opposites (ἐναντία), but he does so at 102d-e.
6. The characterization is, of necessity, loose. Roughly, it refers to those predicates which cannot, as a matter of logic, be true of a subject at the same time and in the same respect. Some pairs of opposite predicates (e.g., "large" and "small", "hot" and "cold", "beautiful" and "ugly") are contraries, but the most important feature of these, as of "equal" and "unequal", "odd"

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and "even", and other contradictories (judging from Plato's treatment of them), is their apparent incompatibility; and this is best brought out in self-contradictory assertions. It is worth noting that Plato's examples are most often comparative or relational predicates. To bring out the intended contradiction in assertions involving opposites I shall use the variables F and not-F as shorthand for any pair of incompatible (opposite) predicates.

7. It has often been remarked that the Presocratic philosophers had no conception of qualities as such. In the absence of the substance-attribute distinction what we would designate a quality was thought of concretely either simply as a member of the class of objects possessing that character or as something resident in the object and responsible for its character. See especially R.S. Bluck, Plato's Phaedo (London, 1955), pp. 175-6; also F.M. Cornford, Principium Sapientiae (Cambridge, 1952), p. 162; W.K.C. Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy, Vol. I (Cambridge, 1962), p. 79; H.F. Cherniss, Aristotle's Criticism of Presocratic Philosophy (New York, reprinted 1971), pp. 361-2. One of the objectives of this paper is to explore some of the philosophical implications of that important observation.
8. Acceptable in Greek but not in English. Note that the confusion does not spring from linguistic ambiguity. The meaning of the Greek sentence is clear. The trouble arises from a conflation of subject and attribute.
9. A character is typically designated by one member of a pair of "opposite" (incompatible) predicates, such as "large", "small", "hot", "cold", and the like. But we shall see that the character variable must be extended to include numerical predicates (101c5-7, 104d5-6), which, if not themselves opposites, "bring opposites along with them". What about substance terms, such as "water", "fire", "man", and the like, which are also accompanied by opposites? There is no explicit treatment of substantial entities in the Phaedo, and if we are to take seriously the comment at Parmenides 130c1-5, Plato was at one time puzzled about their status. Nevertheless, the tone of the passage at Phaedo 103c-105d (especially 104e7-105a1) suggests that in that dialogue substantial entities such as fire are to be treated in a fashion parallel to that given the number three, which Socrates calls a Form (ἰδέα). If so, they too will fall within the range of the character variable. (Plato's use of ἰδέα, μορφή, and εἶδος in the Phaedo does not seem to me precise or systematic enough to warrant drawing technical distinctions among their meanings. The words ἰδέα and μορφή are apparently used interchangeably at 104d9-10, and the language at 101c2-7 suggests that ἰδέα is there used interchangeably with εἶδος. The possible differences in nuance need not carry any ontological import.)
10. The historical origins of this problem should therefore not be located simply in Anaxagoras' questions about nutrition, not at least without the reminder that Anaxagoras' theories arose in response to the philosophy of Parmenides. (DK 28 B8: "For what origin will you seek for it? How and whence did it grow? Not 'from what is not' will I allow you to say or think".) Cf. Hackforth, op. cit., p. 131; Bluck, op. cit., p. 107, n. 2; J. Burnet, Plato's Phaedo (Oxford, 1911), p. 102. I do not mean that the Eleatics were the source of any of the actual arguments in the Phaedo. My chief interest in this paper is with the philosophical, as distinguished from the historical, genesis of the Theory of Forms. Accordingly, all references to Socrates are to the dramatic and not the historical personage.

11. The dative case, as has often been remarked, is ambiguous in this context. It signifies the degree of difference between the heights of A and B, but it also is intended to have explanatory force, as is shown by the next two examples, which are illustrative of the same problem and employ the causal  $\delta\iota\alpha$  with the accusative. But it is not at all clear (contra Hackforth, op. cit., p. 131) that the philosophical puzzles connected with A's being taller than B are generated by a confusion between two usages of the Greek dative case. The sense in which "by a head" could possibly be thought to be explanatory is no doubt obscure, but we need not convict Socrates of idiocy in this matter. Perhaps he means no more than that reference to the amount by which one object exceeds another generally puts an end to questions about relative magnitudes, and that he himself used to think that statements incorporating such references constituted a sufficient account of the matter. (If B is six feet tall and A is six feet two inches, it is the extra two inches that make A taller than B; the extra two inches are what justify A's claim to be taller). At the time, Socrates saw no reason to question further:  $\psi\mu\eta\nu\ \gamma\alpha\rho\ \epsilon\kappa\alpha\nu\omega\varsigma\ \mu\omicron\iota\ \delta\omicron\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu$  (96d8).
12. Allowing also that opposites be "necessary" characteristics of whatever they accompany.
13. Not, as suggested by I.M. Crombie as a possibility, the property of being-taller-than-Socrates (An Examination of Plato's Doctrines, II (New York, 1963) p. 312). Throughout the discussion at 102d-103 the attributes themselves are referred to without qualification.
14. Phaedo 102c4:  $\sigma\mu\iota\kappa\rho\acute{o}\tau\eta\tau\alpha\ \epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota\ \delta\ \Sigma\omega\kappa\rho\acute{\alpha}\tau\eta\varsigma\ \pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma\ \tau\acute{o}\ \epsilon\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu\omicron\upsilon\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma$ . 102c7:  $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma\ \epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota\ \delta\ \Phi\alpha\iota\delta\omega\nu\ \pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma\ \tau\eta\nu\ \Sigma\iota\mu\mu\acute{\iota}\omicron\upsilon\ \sigma\mu\iota\kappa\rho\acute{o}\tau\eta\tau\alpha$ . See also Symposium 211a, where the qualifications specifying the time, relation, and respect in which opposites are predicated of a subject are made very explicit. Republic 436b8 and 436e8 contain clear enough statements of the law of contradiction.
15. But the "is" in "Simmias is tall" is not consciously (or strictly) that of identity. If, as I am claiming, the distinction between subject and attribute had not yet been sharply drawn, a semantic counterpart in two uses of the verb "to be", viz., identity and predication, cannot have been seen any more clearly. The two uses of  $\epsilon\iota\nu\alpha\iota$  are merged in a single undifferentiated concept of "being", and this (to put the problem linguistically and therefore, I think, a shade misleadingly) is the source of the fallacy.
16. Cf., for example, Archer-Hind's comment on 102a-103a (The Phaedo of Plato, Second Edition (London and New York, 1894), pp. 104-105).
17. Cf. Vlastos (op. cit., pp. 311-312; followed by Evan Burge, "The Ideas as Aitiai in the Phaedo", Phronesis, 1971, p. 8) for the view that the puzzle arises only if arithmetical operations are treated as physical operations. But at 101b10-c2 Socrates rejects without any such qualification the operations of addition and division as reasons. See also 101c7-8:  $\tau\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \delta\epsilon\ \sigma\chi\acute{\iota}\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \pi\rho\omicron\sigma\theta\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\alpha\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\iota\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha\varsigma\ \kappa\omicron\mu\psi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\omega\eta\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\ \chi\alpha\acute{\iota}\rho\epsilon\iota\nu$ .
18. There follows the long section (97c-99d) in which Socrates describes his hopes and his subsequent disappointment in Anaxagoras' theory of  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  as the cause of all things. I omit consideration of the passage because of Socrates' confession of failure either to discover ( $\epsilon\upsilon\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ ) by himself that the  $\alpha\iota\tau\iota\alpha$   $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\gamma\kappa\eta$  of all things is  $\tau\acute{o}\ \acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{o}\nu\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \delta\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\nu$  or to learn ( $\mu\alpha\theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ ) it from

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others and his disclosure (99c6-d2) of a "second voyage" (δεύτερος πλοῦς), viz., an alternative method of inquiring into the causes of things (ἐπὶ τῇ τῆς αἰτίας ζητησιν). This is surely a reference back to Simmias' remarks at 85c-d, where, in default of discovering (εὑρεῖν) something for ourselves or learning (μαθεῖν) it from another, we are advised (in the absence of divine assistance) to adopt the best and most reliable ἀνθρώπινος λόγος and use it as a raft to sail through life (cf. Pamela Huby, *Phronesis*, IV (1959), pp. 12-14). The λόγος which Socrates is leading up to (at 99d-100c) and which he finally puts forth (at 100c) is the hypothesis that the εἶδος is αἰτία of being, becoming, and perishing. The passage implies that Socrates would have found a teleological explanation acceptable, but teleology as such is not the object of his search. Anaxagoras' theory does not explain how things are disposed for the best, but that need imply little more than that it does not meet the criteria of intelligibility imposed by νοῦς.

19. The inseparability of opposites is brought out clearly at *Rep.*, 479a-b.
20. Literally "that Beautiful" (100c6). Even though the Forms effectively separate individuals from characters, Plato is not entirely clear about the nature of the substance-attribute distinction, and the Forms themselves alternately function as characters and things characterized. Leaving to one side the question of self-predication, we often find terms such as εἰλικρινές, αὐσύνθετον, καθαρόν, ἀθάνατον, θεῖον predicated of Forms. Cf. *Phaedo* 66a, 78c-d, 79c, 80b. It seems wisest therefore to render αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν alternately as "Beauty itself" and "the Beautiful itself", depending on which of these aspects is being stressed, the Form's being a subject-thing or its being a character.
21. Henceforth I shall express the "why-question" (and Plato's answer to it) in this form only, omitting the formulation in terms of "becoming". But it should be kept in mind that Plato's solution is also intended to explain why (in virtue of what) something becomes F.
22. I follow the convention (adopted by Vlastos) of using Greek letters to designate Forms chiefly to preserve the ambivalence of the Form as both individual and property. The character  $\phi$  will thus be an abbreviation for "the Form corresponding to F", which can mean either "F-ness" or "the F itself".
23. F.M. Cornford (*Plato and Parmenides* (London, 1939), pp. 76-80) gives what seems to me a correct analysis of statements of the form "x is F", but he cannot see how (1) "This rose partakes of Beauty" is explanatory of (2) "This rose is beautiful". Hence he complains (p. 77) that "we have only an analysis of a statement or of a fact, not a reason for the statement being true or a cause of the fact's existence". But Cornford did not grasp the nature of Plato's problem clearly enough to see that the Form secures the possibility of the fact, hence, the intelligibility of statements thought to be descriptive of it. He therefore did not see that (2) can be true only because it is expanded by (1). The causal (explanatory) power of the Forms is conveyed by the instrumental dative, διὰ with the accusative, and the verb ποιεῖν.
24. The clause ὡς τοῖς ῥήμασι λέγεται (102b9) refers back to 102b4 (ὅταν Σιμμίαν Σωκράτους φῆς μείζω εἶναι, φαίδωνος δὲ ἐλάττω) and not to 102b8 (τὸ τὸν Σιμμίαν ὑπερέχειν Σωκράτους), which in some translations (e.g. Hackforth, Bluck) is put in quotations. Hence the words referred to as not properly expressing the fact of Simmias' surpassing Socrates (τὸ τὸν Σιμμίαν ὑπερέχειν Σωκράτους) are "Simmias is taller than Socrates" (Σιμμίαν Σωκράτους μείζω εἶναι).

The argument concludes with (102c10): "In this way, therefore, Simmias is said to be both short and tall".

25. Cf. Republic 523a-525a where the identical problem, which arises in that context over the length of a finger, is said to provoke philosophical reflection. Sight presents the large confused or mixed (συγκεχυμένον) with the small, reporting that a finger is both large and small and consequently that the large and small are one. It is the work of intelligence (νόησις) to clear up this confusion by viewing as separate and unmixed (κεχωρισμένον) what the senses perceive as one. Intelligence thus affirms the existence of two distinct things (the large and the small) rather than one. Here the intelligible (τὸ νοητόν), i.e., the Forms, must be distinguished from the visible (τὸ ὁρατόν), i.e., sensory particulars, to resolve by clarification (σαφήνεια) familiar logical difficulties marring the purity of sensory phenomena. This is none other than the doctrine of the Phaedo. To come to an understanding of what seems to be a paradoxical sensory phenomenon by positing intelligible entities distinct from that phenomenon is the same as being able to produce an explanation of it by the same device. The problem in the Republic passage, as in the Phaedo, is to separate things (the large and the small) left unseparated (ὄν κεχωρισμένα) by the senses. Hence it cannot be resolved by pointing to the different times, relations, and respects in which opposing characterizations are true of a subject. There is no evidence that Plato ever took seriously the sophistries based on failure to indicate the varying times, relations, and respects in which a subject might be said to "suffer, be, or do opposites" (Rep., 437a1-2; see also 436b -437a; Euthydemus 293c-d), and this makes it all the more doubtful that the serious discussion at 523a-525a should turn on that sort of fallacy. (Cf. G.E.L. Owen, "A Proof in the 'Peri Ideon'", reprinted in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. R.E. Allen, (London, New York, 1965) p. 306; G. Vlastos, "Degrees of Reality in Plato", New Essays on Plato and Aristotle, ed. R. Bambrough (London, 1965), p. 15). Adam rightly relates Rep. 523-525 to Phaedo 100-103 and perceives that the main point of the Republic passage is to draw attention to the way in which we come to distinguish between Forms and their impure alloys in the physical world, which is to say, the way in which we come to discover that there are Forms. (The Republic of Plato II, (Cambridge, 1902), notes on 523ff.). The Republic passage should also be read with Phaedo 74b4-c5, with which it has close affinities; and Theaetetus 154-157, which sets forth "Protagoras'" solution to the same type of problem.
26. Crombie (op. cit., pp. 291-292) aptly remarks that Plato's use of φαίνεσθαι in contexts in which opposites are attributed to sensory particulars may be indicative of his reluctance to assert that an individual is both F and not-F. The term may also point to the sensory origin of the confusions connected with opposites.
27. The same point is made in Parmenides, where the crucial distinction between character and owner is stressed at 129c2-4 and again at d2-5: "If someone tries to show that the same thing is both many and one--that is, stones and sticks and the like--we shall say he has demonstrated that something is both many and one, not that the one is many nor the many one". In that dialogue too the hypothesis of Forms is put forth in an effort to dislodge the contradiction arising from failure to distinguish (separate) an (opposite) attribute from the subject possessing that attribute.

28. The same analysis applies to the "cleverer" explanation (105c2), even though it has a quite different function in the argument. The motivation for producing it and the use to which it is put are quite narrowly restricted to the proof of immortality; so the "cleverer" explanation brings us back to the main theme of the dialogue. Nevertheless, if  $\emptyset$  makes it possible for  $x$  to be  $F$ , any Form that entails ("brings along")  $\emptyset$  also makes it possible for  $x$  to be  $F$ . This is the substance of 105b5-c7. (I think it is likely that  $\pi\upsilon\rho$ ,  $\mu\upsilon\epsilon\tau\epsilon\acute{\rho}\varsigma$ , and  $\mu\omicron\nu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$  in that passage are intended to apply both to Forms and concrete particulars. Throughout the section beginning at 103c10 up to the passage in question it is not always apparent from the text whether Plato is talking about Forms or concrete particulars, but the ambiguity is necessary for the immortality argument.)
29. For discussion of this distinction see Cornford (op. cit., pp. 78ff.); Hackforth (op. cit., pp. 143, 153-157); Ross (op. cit., pp. 30-31); Bluck (op. cit., pp. 17-18); R.G. Turnbull, "Aristotle's Debt to the Natural Philosophy of the *Phaedo*", *Philosophical Quarterly*, 8 (1958), pp. 131ff.; D. Keyt, "The Fallacies in *Phaedo* 102A-107B", *Phronesis*, 8 (1963), pp. 167ff.; Vlastos, "Reasons and Causes", pp. 298ff.; D. O'Brien, "The Last Argument of Plato's *Phaedo*", *Classical Quarterly N.S.* 17 (1967), pp. 201-203; W.J. Verdenius, "Notes on Plato's *Phaedo*", *Mnemosyne* 11 (1958) pp. 232-233.
30. I mean immanent character as distinguished from the individual as such. My argument is directed only against the notion of a tripartite ontology, and it intends no implications as to the nature (analysis) of individuals, about which the *Phaedo* seems to me to shed very little light. It is noteworthy that the passage in *Parmenides* in which a tripartite ontology does seem to be implied (133c9-d5) has *Parmenides* (not *Socrates*) as the speaker, putting forth a criticism of the theory of Forms. I find no similar ontological implication in *Parmenides*' words at 130b3-4. In that context "Likeness itself" and "the likeness we possess" simply paraphrase the distinction drawn in the sentence immediately preceding between the Forms themselves ( $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\eta\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}$ ) and the things that share in them ( $\tau\acute{\alpha}\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omega\nu\ \mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\chi\omicron\nu\tau\alpha$ ). The stress in the passage is on the separation of Forms from particulars; accordingly *Parmenides* is inquiring about *Socrates*' commitment to the doctrine of separately existing Forms.
31. Nor does Plato need the notion of an immanent form for the immortality argument at 105b5-107. It is clear, at least by 106b2, c9 (if not at 105e6 or before), that the soul is not a character (immanent or transcendent) but something which is itself characterized as immortal.
32.  $\nu\upsilon\acute{\nu}\ \delta\epsilon\ \pi\epsilon\acute{\rho}\iota\ \epsilon\kappa\alpha\iota\acute{\nu}\omega\nu\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \omega\acute{\nu}\ \epsilon\acute{\nu}\omicron\upsilon\tau\omega\nu\ \epsilon\chi\epsilon\omega\ \tau\acute{\eta}\nu\ \epsilon\pi\omega\nu\upsilon\mu\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\ \omicron\upsilon\omicron\mu\alpha\acute{\zeta}\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\alpha$ . At 105c, regardless of the status of  $\pi\upsilon\rho$ ,  $\mu\upsilon\epsilon\tau\epsilon\acute{\rho}\varsigma$ ,  $\mu\omicron\nu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ , it is evident that  $\theta\epsilon\rho\mu\acute{\omicron}\nu\eta\varsigma$ ,  $\nu\acute{\omicron}\sigma\omicron\varsigma$ , and  $\pi\epsilon\acute{\rho}\iota\tau\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu\eta\varsigma$  are Forms and are thought of very loosely as being "in" things, even though at that point *Socrates*' interest in the "safe"  $\alpha\iota\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$  has given way in the face of a "cleverer"  $\alpha\iota\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$ . Cf. also 104b9-10. One of the principal interpretations of participation ( $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\lambda\alpha\mu\beta\acute{\alpha}\nu\epsilon\iota\nu$ ) criticized in the *Parmenides* (131-132) is that Forms are literally "in" particulars (cf. 133c-134).

33. At 74a9-c5 equality is said to be something different (ἕτερον) from equal sticks, stones, and the like--something over and above all these things (παρὰ ταῦτα πάντα). We are made aware of this difference by the fact that equal sticks and stones sometimes appear unequal, whereas equality never appears to be inequality nor the equals themselves unequal. At Republic 524a3-4 we are told that the same thing is perceived as both hard and soft, that (a9-10) according to sensory reports the heavy is light and the light heavy, that (c3-4) the great and the small are not separated (οὐ κεχωρισμένον) in our perception but mixed (συγκεχυμένον), and that (c6-8) intelligence must clarify this confusion by regarding them as separate rather than mixed; that is, (b10-cl) it must consider the opposites, separated, as two instead of considering them, unseparated, as one (εἰ ἄρα ἐν ἑκάτερον, ἀμφοτέρω δὲ δύο, τὰ γὰρ δύο κεχωρισμένα νοήσῃ: οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἀχώριστά γε δύο ἐνδεί, ἀλλ' ἓν). The separation of opposites is accomplished by distinguishing between the intelligible Form (τὸ νοητόν) and the visible object (τὸ ὁρατόν) in which it is manifested (cl3). The status of Forms as separated and unmixed is underlined by epithets such as εἰλικρινές, καθαρόν, ἄμεικτον, μονοειδές (Phd. 66a, 67b, 78d, 79d, 80b; Sym. 211b, 211e).
34. Burge writes (op. cit., pp. 6-7) that the relation between (1) "x participates in  $\phi$ " and (2) "x is  $\phi$ " "must be a non-symmetrical relationship in view of the ontological commitment of (1)", and (p. 10) that to affirm (2) "is to make a statement free from metaphysical presuppositions". But Plato's point is quite to the contrary. His aim in postulating Forms is precisely to uncover the ontological commitments that really are being made when we utter statements of the form "x is  $\phi$ ".
35. The language at 103e3-5 and 104b7-10 suggests that the reference is to particulars. But at 104d5-7 it is said that whatever things are occupied by the Form of three are compelled to be three and also odd, an indication that three, and very likely fire, fever and unity (105c), are intended to be understood also as Forms. See the parallel treatment of three, two and fire at 104e8-105a1. The numerical references at 104a-c (ἡ τριάς, ἡ πεμπτής, τὰ δύο, τὰ τέτταρα, τὰ τρία) only add to the ambiguity of the passage, which must be intentional on Plato's part. The entire discussion from 102d5 to 105c7 may be read as applying to both Forms and individuals.
36. My argument in this section has been a negative one. It has not been my purpose to offer a detailed interpretation of the text from 103d to the end of the immortality argument. That complicated passage raises more questions than I could hope to deal with in this paper. Instead I have focused on a single problem which bears directly on my thesis with the aim of showing that nothing in Plato's language there commits him to a tripartite ontology. Given these limitations of objective, the thesis set forth in this paper will be compatible with more than one interpretation of that passage.
37. For example, Meno 71e-72d, Euthyphro 5d-6e, Hippias Major 287d-e, Laches 190e-192a, Theaetetus 146d-e; see also Republic 331c-d, Euthydemus 300e-301a.
38. Ross (op. cit., p. 83) refers to Parmenides, Theaetetus, Sophistes, and Politicus as a "group of dialogues which display an interest in Eleaticism that has hitherto been absent". Bluck (op. cit., p. 184) writes that "the Phaedo...is concerned with the Forms as metaphysical 'causes' and as objects of moral aspiration that are 'real', and hardly touches upon logic at all".

Burnet finds no Eleatic influence in the Phaedo, but sees the later dialogues as Plato's attempt to emancipate himself from the Megarian influence (Greek Philosophy, (London, 1960) pp. 231-235).

39. My conclusion in its most general form thus accords with Paul Shorey's contention that in the Phaedo Plato "is really describing a possible procedure of logic and not a false a priori method of the investigation of nature" ("The Origin of the Syllogism", Classical Philology XIX (1924), p. 8).
40. Burge (op. cit., pp. 3-4) notices that the candidates for αἰτίαι in the Phaedo are frequently entities rather than propositions, but he attributes this to an aspect of the "syntactical behavior" of the Greek term αἰτία.